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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

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**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



The importance of Turkish and US relations: contributing for joint objectives of  
a secure Middle East

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The importance of Turkish and US relations: Contributing for joint objectives of  
a secure Middle East

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this thesis reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the National Defense University, Joint Forces Staff College, or the Department of Defense.

This thesis is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes, or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy.

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The importance of Turkish and US relations: Contributing for joint objectives of  
a secure Middle East

**Abstract**

For decades, Turkey has stood as the bastion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the alliance's south-eastern flank and guarded a long shared border with the former Soviet Union. Currently, Turkish support remains critical to US global and regional strategy in a confrontation with a near peer competitor, such as Russia or China. Today, Turkey is allowing US forces to operate from Turkish air bases, which have served as the crucial staging ground for the US-led strikes against ISIS in both Syria and Iraq, but in 2003 it denied the US use of its territory to invade Iraq. As a Muslim-majority country that is transitioning from being a secular democratic state toward its Islamic roots, a member of NATO, and a long-standing US ally, Turkey is pivotal to the US strategy to shape the Middle Eastern security environment. Turkey could also be a key test for the role of Islam in current politics and its influence on external policy. Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Turkey's Islamic parties were unable to win the broad appeal and were frequently alienated or intimidated by the secular government. However, the success of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in multiple elections since 2002 demonstrates the growing strength of Turkish President Erdogan's Islamist movement.<sup>1</sup> Today Turkey faces numerous challenges within its region. The US and Turkey must build and retain a positive and productive relationship that spouses NATO membership to maintain stability for a key region.

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1. Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2008), ix.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between the US and Turkey is crucial to enable diplomatic affiliations in terms of world politics and shared interests. The interrelation of Turkey and the US is vital, where maintaining a strong alliance in the seam of the East and West is critical to regional stability. The Justice and Development Party's (AKP) divergence can lead to political disagreements which could weaken the relationship.

In 1923, after a revolution led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Ottoman Empire was abolished, and modern Turkey was formed as a parliamentary republic. Kemal, a gifted strategist, argued that creativity, and economic vitality is essential to establish modernity. A creative and productive country needed education, so Kemal advocated a unified school system with secular, Turkish language schools.<sup>2</sup> Under Mustafa Kemal's leadership, the country adopted wide-ranging social, legal, and political reforms. Since his death, the Republic has seen peaceful as well turbulent transitions of power from one political party to another.

Turkey is a Muslim-majority republic, with the world's 17<sup>th</sup> largest economy and the second-largest military in NATO, it has played a wide range of crucial roles internationally. Turkey has been described as a barrier against the spread of communism during the cold war, as a link between the East and the West, as well as a democratic model for the Middle East; it stood as the West's frontier in the nuclear showdown with the USSR, with the basing of US Jupiter missiles in 1959. However, the Turkish-American relationship is complex, dynamic, and goes beyond any reasonable simplification. The United States cannot ignore Turkey's role in the Middle East and

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2. Austin Bay, *Ataturk: Lessons in Leadership from the Greatest General of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 161.

Turkey's strategic position on the Bosphorus Straits bridging the East and West; this could give Turkey leverage in a US-Turkey relationship. On the other hand, the US is the more powerful partner in the relationship and therefore expects President Erdogan and his regime to maintain stability in the region, combat terrorism in the Middle East, and support other US interests in the region. The most appropriate approach at this time is to attempt to connect with the Erdogan administration in order to maintain a positive US-Turkish relationship.

## Chapter 1: The Political Unrest

The political unrest in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus is a reminder of the importance of regional security cooperation and the special alliance between the two nations. Although each country has its unique interests and priorities in the Syrian conflict over the past decade, Turkey has made significant military contributions to US and coalition efforts in support of NATO operations in and out of the Middle East. In *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, Carter Findley writes:

Ozal's pro-US policy, which included allowing the use of military bases in Turkey for operations against Iraq, was not popular. Its costs were aggravated after the Iraqi Kurds revolted, with US encouragement, against Saddam Husayn. Once his regime recovered from the war and cracked down, Iraqi Kurds tried to flee into Iran and Turkey. In 2003, after Iraq, Saddam Husayn's regime was toppled, Kurdish autonomy continued in northern Iraq, as did Turkish concerns about the Iraqi Turkmens, some of whom lived in Kurdish zone.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, stubborn issues plague the relationship. While both countries aim at fostering their relations, there are significant points of divergence in their policies and perspectives. In an article published by The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *US-Turkey, Relations how to proceed after Obama*:

Failing to fill in the big bubble of model partnership with concrete targets and the support of institutional structures, the two countries fell short of realizing a “special relationship.” This has paved the way for divergences, even on basic security and strategic issues, particularly in the Middle East. For instance, the disagreement on how to deal with Iran, specifically Turkey’s rejection of the U.S.-initiated United Nations Security Council resolution on new sanctions, caused a major rift.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University, 2010), 369.

4. Mehmet Yegin and Hasan Selim Ozertem, “U.S.-Turkey Relations: How to Proceed after Obama,” *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, November 2016, 1.

Each side consistently falls short of the other's expectations, unlike during the Cold-War period when each country was aware of what to give and receive in the partnership.

The most recent attempted Turkish military coup began on 15 July 2016, at about 2200. The coup began with shots fired inside the General Staff complex in Ankara. Shortly afterward, the Presidential complex in Ankara came under fire from tanks and helicopters. Meanwhile, it was reported that military forces had closed Istanbul's key bridges over the Bosphorus, and its principal air hub, Ataturk airport.<sup>5</sup> Factions of the Turkish army took control of the state broadcasting agency (TRT) to announce the coup officially. Prime Minister Binali Yildirim informed the nation that a coup attempt was underway. Addressing the country via mobile telephone, President Erdogan confirmed the coup and urged people to resist and defend Turkey's democracy by going out on the streets.<sup>6</sup> Although details of the involvement are still under investigation and not yet confirmed, security sources indicate that the coup was carried by some high and mid-ranking officers who are members of the Fethullah Gulen movement. Turkey has categorized the movement as a Terrorist Organization (FETO) led by US-based, self-exiled Fethullah Gulen. Soner Cagaptay, recently wrote in *Policy Watch*, that Ankara blames the Turkish Muslim cleric Gulen, as being behind the coup event. Many analysts agree that Gulen-aligned officials formed the core group of the plotters to overthrow the President. Despite this indictment, Turkey has not presented evidence that Gulen was behind the attempted coup. Many in the Turkish media have aired allegations about the

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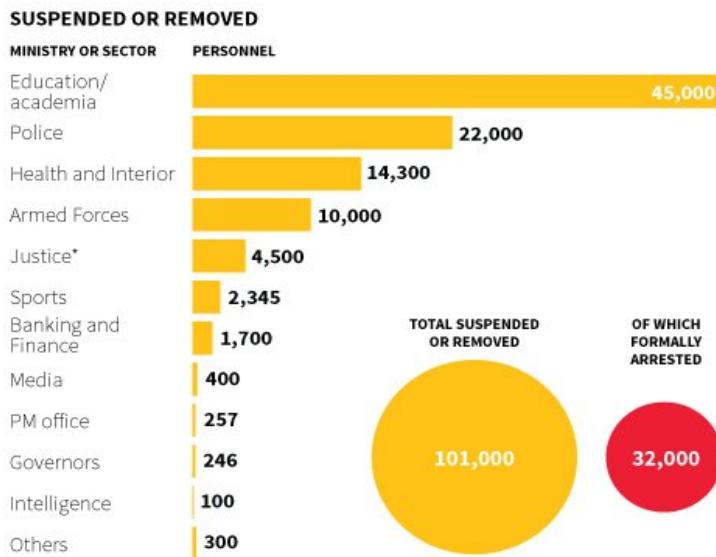
5. Nedim Sener, Ismail H Pekin, Ahmet Z Ucok, "Attempted Military Coup Q&A," *Turkish Heritage Organization*, <http://turkheritage.org/en/publications/coup-attempt-resource-center/tho-brief-a> (accessed October 09, 2016).

6. Ibid., (accessed October 09, 2016).

US role in the attempted overthrow of President Erdogan.<sup>7</sup> Almost one-third of the 220 Brigadier generals in the Turkish Armed Forces

## Turkey purge

Reported number of arrested, removed, or suspended personnel by sector after the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15.



\*Includes military judges. Numbers are fluid and are subject to change.

Note: All military judges and prosecutors in the country placed under investigation.

Source: Reuters, Turkish media reports

Staff, 06/10/2016

REUTERS

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and about 10 Major Generals were detained. Retired Air Force Commander General Akin Ozturk and 102 other high ranking officers were captured and arrested on treason charges. According to the Turkish Interior Ministry, more than 6,000 suspects, including military figures and judges have been detained similarly, more than 8,000 officials, including governors, local inspectors, and legal advisors, were suspended.<sup>9</sup> Also alarming about this Erdogan initiative is the large number of academic purges, which could suggest

7. Soner Cagaptay, “Turkish-Russian Ties after the Erdogan-Putin Breakthrough,” *Policy Analysis*, *Policywatch* 2669, August 9, 2016, 1.

8. Richard Outzen, Department of State, e-mail message to author, October 14, 2016.

9. Sener, Pekin, Ucok, “Attempted Military Coup Q&A.”

that Erdogan might be trying to distance his new regime from the Kemalist views based on separation of religion and state.

Said Nursi (1878-1960) was an Islamic sect leader, who embodied Islam, opposed Kemalist views of secularism, and influenced Turkey's Gulen movement. Today the Gulen movement is based partly on the principles of Nursi, "The Nur movement of Fethullah Gulen has benefited the most from this political, and economic liberalization. One of the most influential Muslim leaders of Turkey, Gulen has utilized the ideas of Said Nursi to establish an extensive education system."<sup>10</sup> Today Gulen has inspired social transformation in Turkey by being a proponent of interweaving religion and science.<sup>11</sup>

Sonner Cagaptay, writes that "Many in Ankara share a view that because the Turkish Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen lives in the United States, Washington is behind the coup attempt."<sup>12</sup> He also describes the failed coup attempt as the most traumatic event in Turkey since the fall of the Ottoman Empire along with President Erdogan being targeted and survived the assault as he fled the hotel where he was staying, only minutes before the assassination squad arrived.<sup>13</sup>

The conflict in Syria, with which Turkey shares a 911-kilometer border, has caused tremendous instability in the region and inflicted huge material and humanitarian damage; it also threatens to become a source of a series of broader and more sustained wars. Also, Washington's support for Turkey's potential adversaries, including Kurdish factions in Syria, has increased the friction and differences between the two nations. At

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10. M. Hakan Yavuz, and John L. Esposito, *Turkish Islam, and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), XXVII.

11. Ibid., 29.

12. Cagaptay, "Turkish-Russian Ties after the Erdogan-Putin Breakthrough," 1.

13. Ibid., 1.

the same time, The US is increasingly uncomfortable with the strengthening ties between Turkey and Moscow. There are published reports describing the role of Turkey and Russia such as Soner Cagaptay who writes in the *Turkish-Russian Ties after the Erdogan-Putin Breakthrough*:

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, decided to take steps to normalize ties between their countries, a dramatic turnaround following several months of tensions in the wake of Turkey's shoot-down of a Russian plane violating Turkish airspace. After the incident, Russia slapped Turkey with economic sanctions along with applying pressure in the cyber, military, and intelligence realms. Moreover, in Syria, where the two sides oppose each other in a proxy war, had escalated, with Russia providing weapons to the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish group tied to the Turkey-based Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK), which Turkey is currently fighting. In return, Turkey has increased its support to anti-Assad rebels battling the regime around Aleppo.<sup>14</sup>

The AKP's political rise in 2002 has led Turkey to play a larger diplomatic role in its region. Previous Turkish governments, under Kemalism views chose not to focus on regional affairs.

### **Partner in a Troubled Region**

In the future, several factors are likely to shape Turkish-US relations. The first aspect is how the US positions itself as a global power by pivoting its attention to Asia while minimizing its military footprint and expenditures in the Middle East. As Stephen Larrabee indicates in *Turkey as a U.S Security Partner*:

Since the creation of the NATO in 1949, America's security partnership with Turkey has been a strategic asset that both parties value. Now, however, trends in the greater Middle East, in Turkish security policies, and within Turkish society itself appear to be eroding the commonality of interest that constitutes the foundation of that partnership. Left unchecked, these trends could diminish U.S. influence in Turkey and increase instability in the Middle East.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Cagaptay, "Turkish-Russian Ties after the Erdogan-Putin Breakthrough," 1.

15. F. Stephen Larrabee, *Turkey As a U.S. Security Partner*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2008), iii.

What may lay ahead is that Turkey is likely to become an increasingly unpredictable and more problematic ally. While the Turkish Republic will seek to maintain an ideal relation with the US, Turkey might well become bogged in the Middle East by the Kurdish issue, and the current Syrian conflict along with its refugee crises. Therefore, the tensions between Turkey's Western Ataturk goals and its Ottoman roots are likely to grow. The Munich Security Conference Report, *Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order?* reports that:

As the centenary of the Turkish Republic approaches in 2023, Turkey is shaken by developments that are changing the face of the country significantly: a failed coup and an ensuing crackdown, a resurging domestic conflict, and a war at its borders. This all comes at a time when Turkey's relation with the West are more strained than they have been in many years.<sup>16</sup>

Simultaneously, the differences that have manifested themselves between the US and Turkey will continue to grow.<sup>17</sup> Ronald H. Linden's in *Turkey and Its Neighbors* indicates that the United States can play a crucial role in ensuring that Turkey transforms into a constructive transatlantic partner in its troubled region. The stakes in doing so are high, as Turkey is a critical NATO ally on several issues topping the US foreign policy agenda including Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and violent extremist organizations.<sup>18</sup> Commenting on the role Turkey plays with its neighbors, he writes:

Finally, unlike the United States and the EU, Turkey is an actor “of” and not simply “in” the Middle East and Eurasia. As such, its policies can help realign those regions geopolitically and ideationally by fostering bilateral and regional integration and unsettling their balance-of-power logic. Turkey’s ambition of “zero problems” with its neighbors, and its policies of openness and engagement with all parties, may be viewed as fanciful and

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16. Munich Security Conference, “Munich Security Report 2017” *Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order?* (February 2017), 22.

17. Larrabee, “Turkey As a U.S. Security Partner,” vii.

18. Ronald Linden et al., *Turkey and Its Neighbors: Foreign Relations in Transition* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 213.

unrealistic. Given that Turkey's neighborhoods are conflict ridden, Ankara will be unable to improve relations with some actors without hampering its ties to others.<sup>19</sup>

Today, Turkey provides some of the most important forward bases to the US, which gives the US a much needed strategic depth.<sup>20</sup> Since it joined the alliance in 1952, Turkey has been a strong, and reliable member of the NATO alliance. "The end of the Cold War had a major influence on Turkish foreign policy. During the Cold War, Turkey concentrated primarily on containing Soviet power and strengthening its ties with the West."<sup>21</sup> Today, post-cold war, the Turkish Republic faces different challenges. The fragmentation of societies and cultures post a constant problem for the nation, Larrabee concludes:

The end of the Cold War removed the Soviet threat and opened up new opportunities and vistas to Turkish foreign policy: the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the Middle East. No longer a flank state, Turkey found itself at the crossroads of a new, emerging strategic landscape that includes areas where it had long-standing interest and/or historical ties. Turkey sought to exploit this new diplomatic flexibility by establishing new relationships in the areas it had previously neglected, above all the Middle East and Central Asia.<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally, the threats and conflicts to Turkish interests were from the North, where Turkey served as the alliance's fortification against the USSR on the Southeastern flank. Today's threats to Turkey are on its Southern boundaries, where instability in Syria has caused a surge of refugees into Turkey. Additionally, the idea of a Kurdish state in Iraq or Syria does not sit well with the Erdogan administration.<sup>23</sup>

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19. Linden, "Turkey and Its Neighbors," 211.

20. Kostas Ifantis and Ioannis Galariotis, "The US and Turkey in Search of Regional Strategy: Towards Asymptotic Trajectories," *UNISCI Discussion paper, No 36* (October 2014): 15.

21. Larrabee, "Turkey As a U.S. Security Partner," 3.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 23.

In 2009, Turkey bluntly objected to Anders Rasmussen's appointment as NATO's secretary general. According to Turkey's spokesperson, this selection highlighted the unusual decision-making structure in the alliance, thus dampening the spirit of cooperation. Zeyno Baran, articulates this issue in *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism*,

The AKP's Kemalist opponents also warn that an Islamist tint is coloring Turkey's relation with its European allies. One stark indicator was Ankara's opposition to the candidacy of Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen as NATO Secretary General in 2009. The Turkish government protested that a Danish secretary general would alienate the world's Muslims, some of whom, in 2006, reacted angrily to satirical images of the Prophet Muhammad published in Danish newspapers.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that these activities have no direct threat towards NATO or Turkish standing in the organization, they do happen to pose many questions and concerns regarding the motives of Turkey and their willingness to commit to the alliance itself.

Ergo, the United States, as a representative of freedom and an international advocate for democracy, must continue to advocate for the rule of law and civil liberties. These affairs must be conducted with the utmost care and sensitivity to the issues at hand. Additionally, a concern that is often attached to Turkey is the Armenian genocide allegations. There is also concern from the Turks about being saddled with a bill for reparations or territorial concessions. Mustafa and Aysegul Kibaroglu, wrote in *The Global Security Watch, A Reference Handbook on Turkey*:

The Armenian allegations of genocide have been debated in the Turkish public domain, in the media, in scholarly circles as well as in politics with the participation of large segments of the society. It is not possible to say that the tone or the content of the debate is always satisfactory or to the point. But, considering the sensitivity of the subject matter, this is an understandable situation, at least for the time being. There are a number of

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24. Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2010), 123.

reasons why such a debate takes place. First, an overwhelming majority of the Turks are proud of their past and they are not ashamed of their ancestors just because they are blamed by others for having committed a crime.<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, Turks believe that a series of atrocities occurred in centuries-long series of wars between Russia and Turkey (in which the Armenians were involved on both sides), and that singling one such atrocity out as a genocide is ahistorical and arbitrary. The United States must encourage Turkey to play a pivotal role in ensuring regional stability, security, and resolving conflicts in the Caucasus.

### **The Pursuit of Regional Order**

Furthermore, as Turkey navigates regional rivalries without clear support from western allies, the risk of deepening anti-westernism, and destabilizing unilateral actions on the part of Turkey increase. It is imperative that the United States not stand idly, as these events manifest themselves. Unless differences are not immediately tended to, they present a huge threat to the stability and future of the relations between Turkey and NATO. Erdogan helped to change many of the misconceptions that ran rampant in the country, essentially asserting that the countries in the Middle East, and EU attempted to block and contain Turkey. “The AKP defines itself as a “conservative democratic” party, not as an Islamist party, but many Kemalists fear that it has a hidden Islamic agenda and that its ascendancy poses a threat to the secularist nature of the Turkish state.”<sup>26</sup> Turkey has had many strained relationships in the AKP party, but the tensions have been shaped by regional crises much more than by ideology or Islamism per se. During the year 2010,

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25. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Aysegul Kibaroglu, *Global Security Watch-A Reference Handbook, Turkey* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 149.

26. Rabasa and Larabee, “The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey,” 31.

the government developed a policy which was geared towards rebuilding relationships with different adversaries of the past to cultivate positive economic and political change.

However, the success of these attempts has to be determined as they have not fully materialized. In 2009, the Kurdish opening was an attempt to help end the conflict between Turkey's government and a portion of its citizens. When taking into consideration the advances and attempts at democratization of the Turkish Republic, the United States has to continue to develop relations and collaborative efforts with Turkey. Due to security and trade deals worth billions in revenue for each country, the Turkish people, and the United States need to find significant changes and progress in the relations. However, political analysts argue that America's vision for a democratic Turkey has failed. This can be seen largely as a result of the different events that occurred during the 2014-2015 year, and that these events reveal that there must be a more concentrated effort to rebuild the area and fend off the trend of dictatorship.

The chances are that the Turkey-US alliance could be another victim of regional upheaval and Russia's rise. Today, the Turkish-US interactions are increasingly challenging and testy affairs. In fact, the Turkish president has insinuated US support for the most recent coup attempt and citing a lack of cooperation on America's part to extradite Erdogan's staunch critic, Fethullah Gulen. The attempted coup against the Erdogan's administration has severely cost the US since it backfired. "President Erdogan is not the only one in Turkey disillusioned with America right now. So are many of his countrymen, who feel that their Western allies care more about their own interests than

Turkey's.”<sup>27</sup> Whether America and the EU were involved is the subject of debate in Turkey, as Russia is capitalizing on the US misfortunes in the Middle East. It has not gone unnoticed, given that the Turkish public is increasingly angry and pessimistic. The US cannot neglect Turkey due to the repercussions and retaliatory measures that will benefit US adversaries like Russia, Iran or China, three of the four plus one strategic security concerns of the US. Described by GEN Dunford as the threat baseline, he said “it's four-plus-one: Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and violent extremism. The fifth can flare up in any part of the world.”<sup>28</sup> To understand Turkey's foreign policy, the history of the republic will help explain the actions of the Erdogan administration.

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27. CBS News, “Turkey's disillusionment with the U.S originally aired November 20, 2016, 60 minutes, Interview by Steve Kroft, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-turkey-president-erdogan-disillusioned-with-u-s>, (accessed December, 11, 2016).

28. Jim Garamore, “Dunford Details Implications of Today's Threat on Tomorrow's Strategy” *DoD News, Defense Media Activity*, August 23, 2016, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/923685/dunford-details-implications-of-todays-threats-on-tomorrows-strategy> (accessed December 11, 2016).

## **Chapter 2: The History of Turkey**

The purpose of this section is to give a detailed overview of the history of Turkey with a focus on Ataturk. The first section will focus on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire which was founded in 1299 and lasted until 1922. The second section will focus on Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his rise to power. This section will cover some of the most important reasons for Ataturk founding of the Turkish Republic. The final section will give an overview of the Kemalist views; that is, the views of Ataturk, his followers, and his central ideas for moving Turkey away from the Ottoman legacy into the modern world. This will set the scene for understanding how Turkish identity and the foundation of the modern nation-state that we see in the area today has evolved.

The Ottoman Empire was a hugely influential, and historically significant political entity that existed in the 13<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 by the Oghuz Turkish tribal leader Osman I, and swiftly began expanding into Europe.<sup>29</sup> Osman aimed to broaden the principality of which he was Sultan at the expense of the Byzantine Empire. Osman is noted to have “lived modestly and treated his subjects with justice and equity,”<sup>30</sup> which is perhaps the reason he was such a successful founder and expansionist. The first area of Europe acquired by the Ottoman Empire was the Balkans. There has been a legacy of the Ottoman Empire, regarding language, culture, and religion, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with which Turkey maintains diplomatic relations.<sup>31</sup> Commenting on the height of the Ottoman Empire, Andrew Mango writes:

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29. Metin Heper and Nur Bilge Criss, *Historical Dictionary of Turkey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 235.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., xlvii.

In their heyday, the Ottomans provided law and order over a vast area stretching from central Europe to the borders of Persia, from Morocco to the Persian Gulf, and from Crimea to the Sahara. They perfected a system of government based on the manuals of the Persian viziers of Arab caliphs, adding local practices which had developed in the Eastern Roman Empire, and innovating as the need arose. Their standing army, built round a core of slave troops recruited in the Balkans, was the envy of cash-strapped European monarchs.<sup>32</sup>

One of the reasons for the success of the empire was its geographical location. Present day Istanbul, at the time known as Constantinople, lies at the intersection between Europe and Asia, and thus forms an important part of the relationships, both trade and social, between Eastern and Western cultures and ideologies. Constantinople's location also means that it was frequently attacked from both sides, which meant that the Ottoman Empire had to maintain a strong military throughout the height of its power.<sup>33</sup>

At the height of the Ottoman Empire (1500-1700), under the leadership of Suleiman the Magnificent, the Turkish conquerors did not force the citizens of conquered lands to be displaced. Instead, they intermarried, and many became Turks. However, not all inhabitants of conquered lands became Muslims, and not all of those conquered adopted the Turkish language.

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32. Andrew Mango, *The Turks Today* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2004), 18.

33. CBS News, "Turkey's disillusionment with the U.S originally aired November 20, 2016, 60 minutes, Interview by Steve Kroft, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-turkey-president-erdogan-disillusioned-with-u-s>, (accessed December, 11, 2016).



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Andrew Mango, *The Turks Today*, suggests that “paradoxically, it seems that there were at one time more Turkish speakers among Christian Armenians than among Muslim Kurds. Muslims were in the majority in Ottoman possessions in the Balkans.”<sup>35</sup>

It was the military that is often understood to be the principal source of weakness of the Ottoman Empire. Mustafa and Aysegul Kibaroglu, write in *The Global Security Watch a reference handbook* that, empires were gaining traction in Europe and had several military technologies that were not found in the Ottoman Empire:

Added to the difficulties in sustaining the Ottoman rule in three continents were the technological and scientific developments and innovations taking place in Europe as a result of the Renaissance and the Reformation process. But, the Ottoman Empire could not keep pace with these developments that had direct bearings on the military strengths as well as the economic welfare of the states that were in the same political arena.<sup>36</sup>

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34. 331 Years Ago One Third of a Million Muslims of the Ottoman Empire were Defeated & They've Never Gotten Over It, D.C. Clothesline, September 20, 2014, <http://www.dcclothesline.com/2014/09/20/331-years-ago-one-third-million-muslims-ottoman-empire-defeated-they>, (accessed October 25, 2016).

35. Mango, “The Turks Today,” 18.

36. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Aysegul Kibaroglu, *Global Security Watch-A Reference Handbook, Turkey* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 7.

The goal of gaining back some of its lost territories forced it to ally with Germany in World War I, a goal which was ultimately not successful, even though it achieved significant victories like Gallipoli in 1915. The challenge remained a constraint in its operational reach. Turkey had to conduct wars from the northern littoral of the African continent through the Middle East and into the Caucasus.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Father of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk**

It was against this backdrop that Ataturk rose to power. In what is now Thessaloniki in modern-day Greece, Ali Riza oglu Mustafa was born to a housewife and a military officer in the winter of 1881.<sup>38</sup> In *The Young Ataturk*, George W. Gawrych, writes:

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) ranks among the great leaders of the twentieth century, a product of his time and yet a man in his own right who left a record of significant achievements both as a military commander and a statesmen. This study analyses Ataturk's role as a military commander and a political leader who engaged in both war-fighting and republic-building during the War of Independence (1919-22) in Turkey. In the last year of this national struggle, Ataturk formally wore two hats: Political head of a provisional government and the commander in chief of the army. Among modern war leaders, Ataturk thus belongs to a small minority who successfully combined political leadership and field command in war, much like Frederick the Great and Napoleon who as heads of state also directed tactical battles.<sup>39</sup>

He served as president of the country from its inception in the 1920s until he died in 1938. The surname Ataturk was granted to him in 1934 as recognition for his actions in founding the Turkish state, "father of the Turks."<sup>40</sup> His central ideologies for the Turkish

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37. Kibaroglu and Kibaroglu, "Global Security Watch-A Reference Handbook," 10.

38. Austin Bay, *Ataturk: Lessons in Leadership from the Greatest General of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), xii.

39. George W. Gawrych, *The Young Ataturk: From Ottoman Soldier to Statesman of Turkey* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xi.

40. Ibid., 215.

state revolve around the idea of Turkey as an independent republic. “Ata was grandeur, signifying not only a father, [but] the progenitor of a line,” i.e., the Turkish Revolution.”<sup>41</sup> Ataturk himself often spoke of “populism” or a “people’s government.”<sup>42</sup> To understand how the people of Turkey see themselves and their country, along with foreign relations in the region, one must understand the way in which the Republic of Turkey was founded. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk proved to be both a successful politician and a tactician. He guided the Turkish Republic from abolishing the sultanate in 1922, to forming the Republic in 1923 and ultimately to abolishing the caliphate in 1924. In politics Ataturk was elected as the Republic’s President, its parliament declared Ankara as its capital, and in 1924, the Republic approved a new constitution.<sup>43</sup> Andrew Mango, in *the Turks Today*, emphasizes:

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk did not start from scratch when he founded the Turkish Republic in 1923. He had inherited the administrative structures and traditions of the Ottoman Empire. But the instruments at his disposal – the officers and civil servants trained under the old regime – was to serve a changed country, which had emerged in ruins from foreign invasion and civil war, and which had seen a massive exodus of skilled non-Muslims and an influx of Muslim peasants from the Balkans. Law and order had broken down and traditional social hierarchies had been upset.<sup>44</sup>

The next section covers the Kemalists views of those who followed Ataturk in his attempts to modernize the country.

### **The Kemalist Views**

Ataturk’s beliefs about the Turkish Republic and his approaches to pursuing the Turkey that he wanted are known as the Kemalist view. Kemalism is

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41. Gawrch, “The Young Ataturk: From Ottoman Soldier to Statesman of Turkey,” xi.

42. Ibid., 125.

43. Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University, 2010), 248.

44. Mango, “The Turks Today,” 25.

an ideology that refers to various political, social, cultural, and religious changes that were designed to separate the new Turkey from the history of the Ottoman Empire. The ideology focuses on the things that made these nation-states: democracy, secularism, free education, support for the sciences, and other modernizations. In *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, Yavuz and Esposito write:

European secularism emerged as a solution to the wars of religion in Europe. Thomas Hobbes, the father of modern philosophy, created independent ethics outside of Christianity by excluding religious concerns and values from the public sphere. Because of ongoing religious war in Europe, secularism became a necessity for civil peace and stability, and states soon refused to pursue any religious goals. The separation of the state and religion became the bedrock of the European state system, and secularism became the constitutive feature of modernity.<sup>45</sup>

These elements were believed by Ataturk to be necessary to bring Turkey into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to provide a basis of commonality with the states in Europe that were politically based on these beliefs.

Kemalism has six fundamental principles. These are Republicanism, Populism, Nationalism, Secularism, Statism, and Revolutionism. The term Republicanism refers to a belief that a state should be governed by people and their elected representatives, “through the will of the people, parliamentary elections, rotation of office, and popular sovereignty.”<sup>46</sup> This new direction was a contrast to the sultanate. “At the end of the victorious Turkish independence war in 1922, Mustafa Kemal and his friends in the independence movement were set to implement major changes, which were tantamount

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45. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State, The Gulen Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), xv.

46. Ataturk’s Principles, *Study Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, 2017, <http://theataturksocietyofcanada.ca/mka/revolutions/ataturks-principles/> Rediscovering the path of the great leader (accessed February, 5, 2017).

to revolutions in social, political, economical, religious and judicial spheres of the society.”<sup>47</sup> Kemalists fundamentally believed in creating a state that had elected officials, and moved towards democratic elections that allowed for the creation of a Republic, rather than the previous Ottoman Empire. The idea of Kemalism was to push Turkey into becoming a nation-state that had a political system that was similar to those found in European countries. Ataturk himself was against monarchies and related governments because he felt that they did not represent the will of the people, and that political reforms were needed to create a Republic that represented the will of the Turkish people. Evidently, there are still issues with this in modern-day Turkey – the Kurdish people, for example, are still not represented as they would like – but overall these changes led to the creation of a successful Republic.

The other pillars are also relevant to our understanding of the modern Turkish state. Yavuz and Esposito, indicate that:

Nothing shaped and guided the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal as much as positivism. Positivism shaped the domains of politics, economics, and society. Expert opinion became the final reasoning in terms of setting public policy. Science and technology were regarded as the means to economic development. Faith in positivism became the guiding principle of the Turkish educational system. As the Mustafa Kemal saying went, “science is the truest guide in life.” So Kemalist laicism is not about separation of politics and religion, but rather about restructuring society in accordance with positivist philosophy.<sup>48</sup>

Nationalism is also central to understanding the difference between the Kemalist view and Ottomanism. Kemalists believed in Turkish nationalism that was secular in nature, moving away from the focus on Islam that was central to the Ottoman Empire. “Nationalism means an independent, powerful country free from foreign domination.

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47. Ataturk’s Principles, “Study Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.”

48. Yavuz and Esposito, “Turkish Islam and the Secular State, The Gulen Movement,” xxi.

Unlike the multicultural Ottoman Empire, the Turkish nation is distinct in culture, but it pledged to tolerate diversity in culture and religion and respect individual freedom and conscience.”<sup>49</sup> Ataturk used this as a base to create a secular and Turkish approach to creating a nation-state. While Islam continues to be an influential force in Turkey; there is clear evidence that Kemalist views have had an impact on the religious identity of the Turkish people and the manner in which they govern their country.

Revolutionism is another one of the pillars of Kemalism that has had a significant effect on the modern-day Turkey. Reformism refers to the idea that the traditional institutions of the Ottoman Empire should be replaced with more modern approaches. Kemalists wanted to create a modern society that was revolutionary in nature, to move beyond what they considered outdated institutions.<sup>50</sup> Ataturk’s Principles, *Study Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*, can be interpreted as:

Forward moving vectors which are connected to each other with equilibrium creating public, private and political space in which democracy, equality, liberty, human rights, justice, enlightenment, and freedom can mutually exist, grow and be sustained.<sup>51</sup>

The Kemalist views were essential to the modernization of Turkey and creating a Turkish identity that the people in the new Republic would feel free and prosperous.

In summary, the Republic of Turkey has a long and complex history, much of which can be used to understand why Turkey is the way it is today and

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49. Ataturk’s Principles, “Study Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.”

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

the reasons for the Erdogan presidency and related issues, which will be covered in later sections of this thesis. The Ottoman Empire lasted for several centuries, and as a result, had a lasting impact on Turkey and the way in which the Turkish people see themselves. After the dissolution of the Empire, Ataturk had a major impact on Turkey, creating a republic that was founded on the establishment of a nationalist, secular state that was represented by an elected official. It was during this time that Turkey began to look West, rather than East, and model itself on some of the European nation-states. Kemalists believed in Populism, Statism, Reformism, Secularism, Nationalism, and Republicanism, and it was a combination of these six pillars that led to the creation of the modern Turkish state.<sup>52</sup>

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52. Ataturk's Principles, "Study Mustafa Kemal Ataturk."

### **Chapter 3: The Erdogan Presidency**

The current president of Turkish Republic is Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He assumed office in 2014 after serving as both the Prime Minister of Turkey and the Mayor of Istanbul. In the Historical Dictionary of Turkey, Metin Heper and Nur Bilge Criss write:

Erdogan, Recep Tayyip (1954- ). Politician. After having graduated from a prayer leader and preacher secondary school and the Economics and Trade Department of Marmara University in Istanbul, he worked as a manager in various private sector companies. After 19 years with the Istanbul organization of the Welfare Party (WP), Erdogan became Istanbul metropolitan mayor from that party's list in 1994. As a moderate Islamist, he was exceedingly successful as mayor and quickly made a name for himself in the WP; however, a poem ("Minarets are our bayonets; Domes are our helmets; Mosques are our barracks; Believers are our soldiers") he recited in a political speech in 1998 cost him a 10-month prison sentence, and he was banned from active politics for life. He was still considered the moral leader of the liberal faction within the Virtue Party (VP)-successor party to the WP. Following the closure of the VP in 1999, Erdogan became the leader of the Justice and Development Party.<sup>53</sup>

Erdogan is known for his 2023 vision, which will mark the centenary of the Turkish Republic. Erdogan, like the Kemalists, had the vision to modernize Turkey and bring it more in line with the nation-states found in the west – overseeing accession plans for potential membership of the European Union. Erdogan was also interested in solving the issues with Kurdish militants in the Eastern parts of the country, where allegations of genocide exist, *Tunceli (and the Dersim Massacres of 1937-1938)*:

For the prominent theorist of Kemalism at the time, deputy and former minister Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, Mussolini's fascism was nothing other than a version of Kemalism, even though Turkey's and Italy's foreign policies contrasted. In 1930 Bozkurt had spoken of a war between two races, the Kurds and the Turks, and had gone so far as to say, "All, friends, enemies and the mountains, shall know that the Turk is the master of this country.

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53. Metin Heper and Nur Bilge Criss, *Historical Dictionary of Turkey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 100.

All those who are not pure Turks have only one right in the Turkish homeland: the right to be servants, the right to be slaves.”<sup>54</sup>

While initially President Erdogan showed promise in apologizing to the Kurds for the massacres in Tunceli, and correcting fault lines between the Kurds and Turks, the Kurdish Opening never came to fruition.<sup>55</sup> Erdogan is also known for his investments in infrastructure in the Turkish Republic. Despite this, Erdogan has also been accused of supporting a “Neo-Ottoman” foreign policy, which can be described in two ways. In the more benign sense, this Neo-Ottomanism is an approach that promotes political engagement between Turkey, and of the former regions of the previous Ottoman Empire, and in the more controversial sense, it is associated with reviving Ottoman culture and traditions in the Republic of Turkey.

Erdogan’s presidency has not been without controversy. There were nationwide protests against his government in 2013, arguing that his approach to government is authoritarianism. These protests led to 22 deaths and stalled EU membership negotiations. Fethullah Gulen is another interesting player in understanding modern Turkey. Gulen is a Turkish preacher and former Imam who founded the Gulen movement. Although Gulen currently lives in self-imposed exile in the United States, Gulen was an ally of Erdogan up until 2013, when accusations of corruption halted the relationship. Erdogan’s government was subject to severe investigations surrounding corruption charges, and Erdogan himself believed that Gulen was behind these allegations. The split is now so severe that Gulen is on the Turkish most-wanted list for

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54. “Tunceli (and the Dersim massacres of 1937-1938),” *Among the Armenian Ruins*, August 31, 2015, <https://amongarmenianruins.wordpress.com/2015/08/31/tunceli-and-the-dersim-massacres-of-1937-1938/> (accessed January 1, 2016).

55. BBC News, “Turkey PM Erdogan apologises for 1930s Kurdish Killings,” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15857429> (accessed January 1, 2016).

terrorism and the Gulen movement is known as the Gulenist Terror Organization by the Turkish government. This split between the two former allies has led to some significant changes in Turkey over the last three years which are controversial on the world stage and have led to the deterioration of relationships between the Republic and the US.<sup>56</sup>

### **Fethullah Gulen**

The Gulen movement itself is an Islamic religious and social movement led by Fethullah Gulen. The movement has both supporters and critics within Turkey and from areas of the diaspora and neighboring countries. The Gulen movement is known primarily for its modern take on Islam, focusing on the use of technology to spread the word of Islam and promote social change. Gulenists also work within current market and commerce structures, believing that a traditional Islamic faith can still work within a nationalist republic. Like Ataturk and the Kemalists, there is a focus on science and interfaith dialogue associated with the Gulen movement, and it is described as being one of the most reasonable and well-known Muslim networks.<sup>57</sup> Yavuz and Esposito writes in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*:

Despite the intense activities of the movement, Gulen remained relatively unknown to the nonreligious public until the end of 1994, when the Turkish press began to report euphorically, but not seriously, about him. Interest in the man and his educational projects has remained strong, but after June 1999 media reports about him shifted from a positive to a negative tone.<sup>58</sup>

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56. CBS News, “Turkey’s disillusionment with the U.S originally aired November 20, 2016, 60 minutes, Interview by Steve Kroft, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-turkey-president-erdogan-disillusioned-with-u-s>, (accessed December, 11, 2016).

57. CBS News, “The Gulen Movement, U.S. Charter Schools Tied to Powerful Turkish Imam Fethullah Gulen” 60 minutes, originally aired May 13, 2012, reported by Lesley Stahl, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-charter-schools-tied-to-powerful-turkish-imam/> (accessed December, 11, 2016).

58. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State, The Gulen Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 49.

On July 15, 2016, there was an attempted coup by the military that aimed to remove Erdogan from office. The Munich Security Conference in 2017, reported that:

At the same time, Turkey's traditional links with the West have suffered: "I don't care if they call me a dictator or whatever else. It goes in one ear, out the other," President Erdogan stressed in November 2016. Disappointment over a paralyzed EU accession process, lacking Western sympathy after the coup, and the Turkish government's moves to give more power to the president and to curtail press freedom are some reasons for the deteriorating relationship. However, both Turkey and the West still very much depend on each other. Significant trade volumes, the NATO partnership as well as the 2016 EU-Turkey deal on refugees are just some major examples for this significant interdependence.<sup>59</sup>

The coup has also led to changes in the relationships between Turkey and other countries, with the United States and European leaders both warning Erdogan not to use the coup as an excuse to take an authoritarian approach to dealing with his opponents. This purge has affected, a large sector of academia,<sup>60</sup> where all university deans were asked to resign.<sup>61</sup>

Erdogan himself has ignored these warnings, declaring the country as being in a state of emergency and using the coup as a justification for purging large numbers of Turkish citizens, a recently published article in the economist, *while you were watching Trump...Turkey locks up dissidents*, describes President Erdogan actions:

Mr. Erdogan is backed by a coalition of nationalists and Islamists, fired up by the summer's violence and by his own rhetoric. (To him, this coalition is synonymous with "the national will.") Politicians from the ruling Justice and Development (AK) party accuse Western critics of ignoring the Trauma of the attempted coup on July 15<sup>th</sup>, which left some 270 people dead. They argue that if the junta, thought to answer to the widely reviled Gulenist sect, had wrested power from Mr. Erdogan, it could have meant civil war.<sup>62</sup>

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59. Munich Security Conference, "Munich Security Report 2017" *Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order?* (February 2017), 22.

60. CBS News, "Turkey's disillusionment with the U.S."

61. Munich Security Conference, "Munich Security Report 2017," 22.

62. *The Economist*, "While you were watching Trump...Turkey locks up dissidents," November 10, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21709991-president-erdogan-keeps-purging-turkey-locks-up-dissidents> (accessed January 20, 2017).

To the surprise of some politician and even within the AKP's moderate wings, President Erdogan is now considering the reintroduction of capital punishment, an indicator of fading EU accessions. As of this writing, President Erdogan continues to seek support for amending the constitution and which would allow him greater executive powers.<sup>63</sup> Much of the controversy in the Republic of Turkey has come since 2013, with the corruption accusations and the breaking of the pact between Erdogan and Gulen, which has also led to an increase in accusations of authoritarianism. Some have even called the Erdogan presidency a dictatorship, due to the recent purges, media intimidation, and a polarized political agenda.

### **Divergence, Turkey's New Foreign Policy**

America continued to invest in partnership opportunities with Turkey, and during the recent years of the Erdogan administration, it became evident that various cultural and political differences existed between the two nations. Ronald H. Linden writes in *Turkey and Its Neighbors*:

Turkey's behavior in its neighborhood in the first decade of the new century stands in sharp contrast with that of the 1990's. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey stood as a neighbor in a tough neighborhood, one that included two zones of instability, the Balkans and the Middle East. On three occasions, Turkey came to the brink of war with one of its neighbors: Armenia in 1992, Greece in 1996, and Syria in 1998....Yet, despite tensions with its neighbors and domestic issues such as Turkey's human rights violations, widespread use of torture in prisons, and the rights of Kurdish minorities, Turkey remained a strong transatlantic partner.<sup>64</sup>

In *Turkey's New Foreign Policy, Davutoglu, the AKP and the Pursuit of Regional Order*, Aaron Stein writes, that Ankara has historically paid close attention to regional

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63. The Economist, "While you were watching Trump...Turkey locks up dissidents."

64. Ronald Linden et al., *Turkey and Its Neighbors: Foreign Relations in Transition* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 2.

developments. However, Turkey's foreign policy in the region since its foundation as a state in 1923 was defined by its preference for nonintervention and neutrality in the areas which, until the First World War, had formed part of the Istanbul-centered Ottoman Empire. This new Turkish foreign policy that is creating a divergence, is not an Islamic party taking over, but rather a new approach to be a regional leader.

The AKP government has rejected this noninterventionist approach, choosing instead to adopt a proactive foreign policy aimed at creating "Strategic depth" by expanding Turkey's zone of influence in the Middle East, drawing on the latitude of geography, economic power, and Ottoman history to reconnect the country with its historical roots.<sup>65</sup> Linden concludes in *Turkey and Its Neighbors*:

European and US observers with a long-standing interest and stake in Turkey are struggling to interpret these changes – and some are alarmed. One line of interpretation has been to see Turkey as "Shifting East" and consequently as being "lost" by the West. In this view, Turkey has abandoned its traditional place in the Western camp in order to pursue trade and energy ties with Russia or with pariah states of the Middle East, Syria and Iran....Turkey under the AKP is seen as giving up on "becoming European" and reverting to its Asian or Muslim roots by re-engaging its Middle Eastern neighbors.<sup>66</sup>

In September 2011, soon after the Arab spring, then Prime Minister Erdogan visited Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt to demonstrate Turkey's support for political change in the Middle East. President Erdogan's actions are also an indication of Turkish engagement within its neighborhood, "For Turkey the changes in its neighborhood present a new opportunity to advance Turkish interests. Rather than reflexively frame its response to what was expected of it by its allies, Turkey has pursued actions in its neighborhood

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65. Aaron Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy: Davutoglu, the AKP and the Pursuit of Regional Order* (Abingdon: Routledge Journals, 2014), 2.

66. Linden, "Turkey and Its Neighbors," 3.

within a frame that evaluates the benefits for its own present.”<sup>67</sup> The first serious discussions and analysis of Turkish foreign policy emerged during, Ahmet Davutoglu, the former Turkish Prime Minister’s era. Aaron Stein, writes in *Turkey’s New Foreign Policy*:

This policy is based on the work of Ahmet Davutoglu and it is rooted in the belief that the Eurasian landmass, and the areas that surround it, are of crucial importance to global geopolitics. As such, Turkey, which sits at the centre of this piece of land, is deemed to have a unique opportunity to expand its influence and create strategic depth. In doing so, it is held, it can establish itself as a global power and thereby play a significant role in creating new global institutions that are more in keeping with the world’s different ‘civilisations’ or cultures. Thus, breaking from past approaches to foreign policy, this interpretation of geopolitics is based on an assumption that the spread of Western power into the Balkans, Central Asia and the Middle East is incongruent with Turkish national interests and must be reversed.<sup>68</sup>

Unless the Turkish people understand that positive influences are built on strong national interest and understanding, they cannot maximize the benefits of their geographic location.

Turkey’s relations in its neighborhood, located in the middle of international conflict, includes a remarkably diverse set of cultures, societies, and economies. One issue of contention in modern Turkey is the refugee crisis. Turkey under Erdogan has taken in a high number of refugees fleeing the Syrian war and other conflicts in the area, which should be a reason for strengthening ties with its neighbors. Unfortunately, Erdogan has used this as something of a bargaining chip with the European Union. He has repeatedly threatened to send these refugees to Bulgaria and Romania if Europe does not change its views towards the Republic of Turkey, suggesting that Turkey has done

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67. Linden, “Turkey and Its Neighbors, 80.

68. Stein, “Turkey’s New Foreign Policy,” 2.

more for the refugees than any other nation. Erdogan has suggested that European countries would not know what to do with the refugees if they were sent from Turkey, and suggested that his human rights record is not so bad considering what would happen to these refugees in Europe.

There are former imperial territories and adversaries in the Balkans and the Middle East, new EU members along the Black Sea, and energy-rich post-Soviet states on the Caspian Sea. Given Turkey's historical roots, their current posturing within its region has precedence. Juliette Tolay and Ronald H. Linden write in *Turkey & Its Neighbors*:

Given their past and present, these countries have a complex set of ties with Turkey, reflecting their politics, and economics, their international postures, and their internal situations. Because of this region's significance in contemporary geopolitical, economic, and cultural relations, Turkey's acts toward the people and governments of this region also resonate with countries and organizations that are geographically more distant but still politically significant, like the US and the EU.<sup>69</sup>

Turkey is transitioning and developing its foreign policy; the Republic has gone from being NATO's bulwark in opposing communism and Soviet expansion to redefining its role within the region.

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69. Linden, "Turkey and Its Neighbors," 1.

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

In 2001, former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu drafted Turkey's foreign policy on the theory that the end of the Cold War provided Turkey the opportunity to become a key player in its former Ottoman footprint, he called it Strategic Depth.<sup>70</sup> "The fall of the Berlin Wall changed fundamentally the way the US-Turkish relations had been defined over the years after the end of the Second World War."<sup>71</sup> The US and Turkish relations have transformed since the end of the Cold War; the US foreign policy seems to have changed; Turkey is no longer the bastion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), no longer an outpost on the south-eastern flank. The relations between the two nations have changed due to regional conflicts, and Turkey's domestic government the AKP have transformed and altered the alliance.<sup>72</sup> "The Kemalist secular tradition has been challenged as the dominant identity font and the ruling Justice and Development Party has been successful in the struggle for power against the old secularist guard."<sup>73</sup> While it can be stated that America is not the final judge in dictating the conditions of Western relations that Turkey has, it can, in fact, confront, persuade or attempt to negotiate with Erdogan and his administration, should the need arise.

The Turkish administration may agree to maintain shared interests, but honesty should be a top priority for Washington and Ankara regarding Turkey's NATO standing.

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70. Aaron Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy: Davutoglu, the AKP and the Pursuit of Regional Order* (Abingdon: Routledge Journals, 2014), 88.

71. Kostas Ifantis and Ioannis Galariotis, "The US and Turkey in Search of Regional Strategy: Towards Asymptotic Trajectories," *UNISCI Discussion paper, No 36* (October 2014): 10.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

Despite Turkey's new strategic views, the American government must implement real projects to increase engagement between the United States and Turkey. *On US-Turkey Relations* by Yegin and Ozertem:

Relations between Turkey and the United States received a jumpstart during the Obama administration's first term, but the two countries were nevertheless unable to reach their ambitious goals. In Washington circles there seems to be "Turkey fatigue" as many are dealing with the same problems without progress. In Turkey, there is growing discontent with the United States due to its ongoing close cooperation with the PKK-linked PYD, and it's delayed embrace of the elected government that survived July's military coup attempt.<sup>74</sup>

Uequivocally, the United States needs Turkey to be an active and dependable partner in the region. Turkey should pursue its interests, which includes a healthy relationship with the US and as a faithful member of the alliance. "Existing negative perceptions in bilateral terms undermine the basis for possible cooperation in a cooperative manner. Because a new president will be coming to the White House shortly, there is a need to review and revise the course of policies for the relations to gain momentum."<sup>75</sup>

However, the country should exercise its sovereignty by pursuing its agendas in the same manner as the United States or EU member states. Besides, the Western powers should not forget the present cultural and religious differences with the Middle East. Therefore, their activities in the region must be measured through identification of the long-term consequences. As the relative power of other civilizations increase, the appeal of Western culture fades, and non-Western people have increasing confidence in and commitment to their indigenous cultures.<sup>76</sup> Unless the US redrafts its foreign policy

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74. Mehmet Yegin and Hasan Selim Ozertem, "U.S.-Turkey Relations: How to Proceed after Obama," *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, November 2016, 1.

75. Ibid.

76. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations, and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 183.

strategies, Turkey could head in a direction that contradicts that of the West and potentially Turkey could align with an adversary like Russia.

The relationship between the United States and Turkey has deteriorated somewhat since the recent coup and the purges of those who are against the Erdogan presidency. On the recently published *US-Turkey Relations: How to Proceed after Obama*:

The other disturbing issue for Turkey is about the US reaction to the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Washington's delayed declaration of support for the civilian authority, and the ministerial level Turkish accusations of the United States being behind the coup left both parties with a sour taste. More importantly, the Turkish government has accused Fethullah Gulen with planning the coup and has asked for his extradition from the United States. This process is expected to be long and tedious and might cause another set of bilateral crises along the way. Some ruling elites even see the United States as the "mastermind" orchestrating a conspiracy with different tools to prevent the rise of a "Great Turkey."<sup>77</sup>

Despite this, the two countries still share many common interests, and must maintain, and promote dialogue between themselves to maintain stability in the region. Despite recent changes in the political situation, Turkey remains one of the most modern and Westernized countries in the Middle East and one of few that has some semblance of democracy in government, despite recent accusations of authoritarianism. Erdogan's prime ministry was one of the high hopes for peace in the Middle East, but since he has become president and severed ties with Gulenists, there are some challenges that must be addressed in terms of understanding the common and shared interests between Erdogan's Turkey and the US.

Terrorism is a global issue and one that concerns governments on an international basis. Erdogan is associated with a political Islam, and his party, the AKP, was considered to be one of the most progressive examples of Islam and how it can function

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77. Yegin and Ozertem, "U.S.-Turkey Relations: How to Proceed after Obama," 2.

inside a modern nation-state, “but party leaders assured their Western counterparts that the organization’s leaders had distanced themselves from Islamism to become “conservative democrats.””<sup>78</sup> Despite this, Erdogan’s recent actions have pushed Turkey further away from the modernizing efforts of Ataturk. As prime minister, Erdogan felt that “the EU requirement of reforming Turkey’s penal code” could be used “to justify his own call for the criminalization of adultery.”<sup>79</sup> This was alarming to many outside of the country, as it “would mean the reintroduction of *sharia* norms into private family matters, a step that would weaken the secular legal order.”<sup>80</sup> This goes against the beliefs of the United States and Kemalists and could have a further impact on the state of human rights in the Republic of Turkey.

One of the biggest concerns when attempting to find shared cultural ties and global interests is going to be understanding the type of political Islam that functions in Turkey. The continuing residency of Gulen in the United States is also causing issues regarding Turkish relationships with the US, as Turkey feels that he should be extradited to be prosecuted for his crimes. Gulen’s approach to a global Islam is something that is seen positively in the West, and something that Erdogan himself pushed for during his time as prime minister, despite the fact that it is not represented in his presidency. This can be used as a point of commonality for strengthening relationships between the two countries – focusing on the older beliefs of Erdogan that Islam and democracy can exist harmoniously in one state. The US can also focus on understanding Islam in the context

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78. Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2010), 2.

79. Ibid., 55.

80. Ibid.

of the Ottoman history of the country and assessing the current state of political Islam in Turkey under Erdogan.

The Syrian Civil War and the ongoing difficulties of the Kurdish conflict have also had an effect on the relationship between Turkey and the US. “Turkey’s general public now began to blame the United States for renewed terrorism and ethnic tension emanating from Turkey’s Kurdish population.”<sup>81</sup> US forces in the Syrian Civil War are also allied with the Kurdish YPG/PYD fighters, which does not please the Erdogan administration. An effort by both US and Turkey needs to be made to address this issue and to help smooth out the strategic relationship, particularly as it relates to these two ongoing issues, Darren Butler writes in *World News*:

The rapid advance of U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, taking advantage of Russian air strikes to seize territory near the Turkish border, has infuriated Ankara and threatened to drive a wedge between NATO allies. Washington has long seen the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its YPG military wing as its best chance in the battle against Islamic State in Syria – to the chagrin of fellow NATO member Turkey, which sees the group as terrorists and fears it will stir up greater unrest among its own Kurdish minority.<sup>82</sup>

Understanding the relationship between the Erdogan government and Kurdish identity is key to getting to the bottom of this issue. This complex Kurdish issue continues to be a source of contention between the United States and the Republic of Turkey, and one that causes several issues when attempting to create a diplomatic relationship between the two that takes into account these cultural ties. The long and complex history of Turkey and the surrounding area means that there are several influences on how Turkish people see themselves and the influence of Kemalism, Gulenist movements, and the current

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81. Baran, “Torn Country,” 131.

82. Darren Butler, “Kurds’ advance in Syria divides U.S. and Turkey as Russia bombs” *world news*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUSKCN0VQ1FR> (accessed Jan 10, 2017).

presidency and how Erdogan has changed between his years as prime minister and today.

The relationships between Russia and Turkey is also evolving since the Erdogan-Putin breakthrough, and needs to be monitored regarding Trump's perceived friendship with Putin. This could be another source of a breakthrough between the two countries.

The most appropriate approach at this time is to attempt to connect with Erdogan while still condemning his actions regarding the Kurdish conflict, where relations deteriorated even further when ISIS rebels seized the town of Kobani on the Syrian-Turkish border, and President Erdogan failed to intervene. This will require consideration of all of the historical elements that have led to the Erdogan presidency and his success as a populist leader of Turkey.<sup>83</sup> The connection between Ankara and Washington also needs to focus on creating an approach in which Turkish Kurds remain safe under the protection of American forces, particularly regarding the Syrian civil war. It could also be suggested that creating a Kurdish enclave in Syria supported by a UN action, and an American pull out of Syria to allow for the Syrian government to settle the civil war. A stable Syria would, in turn, improve relationships with Erdogan's Turkey. Mehmet Yegin and Hasan Selim Ozertem suggest:

Current relations trend toward cooperation in a transactional manner. The urgency of the many crises at the international level forces this kind of dialogue, but it also consumes mutual understanding and the very basis of shared common values. The bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey will face serious and deepening divergences, if not utter crisis, if this trend continues. There is a need for a broader perspective that opens a new page based on trust and reinvigorates better cooperation and coordination between the parties. Thus, Donald Trump should consider leaving Turkey fatigue behind and frame a new Turkey policy for Washington DC.<sup>84</sup>

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83. Butler, "Kurds' advance in Syria divides U.S. and Turkey as Russia bombs."

84. Yegin and Ozertem, "U.S.-Turkey Relations," 2.

Today only a few in Washington circles remember the Turkish efforts in supporting the US during the Korean War to confront the spread of communism. *How to Proceed after Obama*, Yegin and Ozertem suggest:

Security has long been the backbone for bilateral relations, but it is important to build up common interests and mutual understanding among different communities in each country. High politics overrun low politics, but more critical issues like economic cooperation and more interaction in future generations are the very foundations on which high politics stand.<sup>85</sup>

To overcome negative diplomacy and build positive ones, there needs to be a higher level of communication among the nations.<sup>86</sup>

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85. Yegin and Ozertem, “U.S.-Turkey Relations,” 3.

86. Ibid.

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## **Vita**

Lieutenant Colonel Raul Rivas is a native of El Salvador and was commissioned from Murray State University in Murray, KY in 1997, as an honor graduate from the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). In 2008, he earned a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

LTC Rivas' assignments in the United States Army include: Squad Leader 2/327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), FT Campbell, KY; 1-18 Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany; Signals Intelligence, The Joint Program Office, Reston, VA; Executive Officer for the United States Army Europe, G2 (USAREUR), in Heidelberg, Germany; Operations Officer for 2d MI BN, 66th Military Intelligence BDE, Wiesbaden, Germany; Regiment chief of intelligence (S2) for 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment, Vilseck, Germany; Military Intelligence Branch, Human Resources Command (HRC) LTC Assignment Officer, FT Knox, KY; The National Security Agency (NSA) Fellowship, 706th MI Group, in Fort Gordon, GA, and most recently commanded the 297<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence BN, in Fort Gordon Georgia, where he deployed a company in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

LTC Rivas is a veteran of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm as part of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, in 2004 he once again deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In Afghanistan, he deployed with the 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While serving as the Battalion Commander of 297<sup>th</sup> MI BN, he deployed elements of the BN in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.